

## Civil society and the calling of self-development

Giri, Ananta Kumar

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Sammelwerksbeitrag / collection article

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Giri, A. K. (2006). Civil society and the calling of self-development. In K.-S. Rehberg (Ed.), *Soziale Ungleichheit, kulturelle Unterschiede: Verhandlungen des 32. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in München. Teilbd. 1 und 2* (pp. 378-392). Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verl. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-145276>

### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Deposit-Lizenz (Keine Weiterverbreitung - keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

### Terms of use:

This document is made available under Deposit Licence (No Redistribution - no modifications). We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document. This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

# Civil Society and the Calling of Self-Development<sup>1</sup>

*Ananta Kumar Giri*

There is an epochal need for sociology to enter into planetary conversations to overcome what Ulrich Beck calls the Nato-like firepower of Western sociology. The theme of civil society can be a very promising starting point for such a transcivilizational dialogue. Civil society, like much social theory, suffers from an *a priori* binding to what can be called a post-traditional telos, which in fact has been turned into a post-traditional theology. But dialogue with Indian history, society and social theory can help us realize that the project of civil society is not just modernistic. Civil society is also not only a space for struggle for empowerment; it is also a space for self-realization, self-development and social transformation. Civil society is not only a space for public deliberation, it is also a space for listening, cultivation of silence and appropriate subjectivity transcending the polarity between the »private« and the »public«.

If we divide the history of mankind into five periods, that is, the prehistoric, ancient, medieval, modern and post-modern, one can say that the history of civil society begins only when the institution of the sacred or the divine kingship begins to dissolve into two differentiated institutions at the dawn of the ancient, or at the very latest the medieval, period out of the past. (...)

Even if this civil society was indeed the »child of the modern world«, still it is the Christian society and its early modern reform that we may also have to consider, and not only the bourgeois society of modern capitalism. By this wider definition, the modern civil society was established or revived in Britain at any rate by the struggle of the Nonconformists, the new Christians, who together severed connection with the established Church of England when it accepted royal supremacy at the time of the Reformation (...). The new Christians wanted instead what we may call salvation through religion in society, with pluralist freedom of conscience and worship for all (J. P. S. Uberoi (2003), »Civil Society«, pp. 115, 120).

Civil society is about social relationships. Its strength lies in the quality of these relationships (...) Questions about trust, altruism, and perception of motives point to the fact that civil society is not only composed of networks and social services. Civil society is to a significant degree composed of

---

<sup>1</sup> This is the revised version of a paper first presented at the symposium on »Civil Society and the Paths of Modernity in India«, Annual Meetings of the German Sociological Association, Munich, October 2004. I thank Dr. Martin Fuchs and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr for their kind invitation to take part in this symposium.

culture (Robert Wuthnow (2004), *Saving America? Faith-Based Services and the Future of Civil Society*, pp. 4, 8).

There are groups as well as individuals all over the world who are increasingly conscious of their creative potentiality and wish to realise their aspirations. Contemporary history is about these multiple selves engaged in dynamic struggles. Some may be forward looking and emancipative while others may be regressive and irrational. But the overwhelming trend is likely to be one that demands respect for each self (Manoranjan Mohanty (2002), »The Self as Center in the Emerging World of the Twenty-first Century: A Sino-Indian Perspective«, p. 1).

## The Problem

It is Jürgen Habermas (1981) himself who quite some time ago had challenged us with the idea that now we need a new philosophy of science which is not scientific. It is worth asking Habermas and all of us sociologists for whom sociological engagement is nothing more than an elaboration of the agenda of modernity whether we need an understanding of and relationship with modernity which is not modernistic. This inquiry is at the core of understanding paths of civil society and experiments with modernities, not only in India but also in Europe, East Asia, Africa, Latin America and around the world. Both conceptions of civil society and modernity suffer from a profound modernistic bias and are part of the post-traditional telos of modernistic sociological theorizing<sup>2</sup>. Here, though the recent discourse of multiple modernities initiated by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (2002) has suggested some new possibilities, the approach of multiple modernities as that of universalistic modernity of Habermas suffers from a modernistic bias when it comes to understanding tradition.<sup>3</sup> Prefiguring my argument, I wish to submit that appreciating the significance of Indian modernities from Buddha to Gandhi challenges us to understand the relationship between modernity and tradition, state and society, religion and secularism in a new way through a multi-valued logic of autonomy and interpenetration rather than through the dualistic logic of modernity. Such a dualistic logic has impoverished our understanding of civil society and modernity in the West

2 For Giddens (1994), sociology is part of the post-traditional telos of modernity and for Beteille (2002), sociology is a modern, neither a postmodern nor a traditional discipline.

3 For example, following Max Weber, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, a key proponent of the multiple modernities approach, defines the core of modernity as the deconstruction of a God-ordained worldview held by all axial civilizations. »Since modern societies are no longer embedded in meaningful transcendental orders, they are in principle open to continuous transformation and adaptation « (Eisenstadt 2002: 10).

itself what to speak of illuminating our historical paths and tryst with modernities in India.

The subject of Indian modernities is quite vast and here I just wish to state that Indian modernities have emerged out of processes of criticism, creativity and struggles through history as in the revolt of Buddha, the rise of Upanshishadic spirituality, Bhakti movements in medieval India, movement for a new renaissance in 19th century, and the multi-dimensional anti-colonial and post-colonial struggles for freedom.<sup>4</sup> Tryst with modernities in India has involved a transformative dialogue between reason and tradition, tradition and modernity, and rationality and spirituality which has shaped their paths, contents and visions. These modernities have generated their own public spaces of coming together, dialogues and public deliberations which bear parallels to what we speak of as civil society in the modern West. Civil society is not only an epistemic project, it is also an ontological project; in fact it is a project of ontological epistemology of participation going beyond the modernistic privileging of epistemology and dualism between ontology and epistemology. Taking inspiration from Bhakti movements, Kabir, Nanak, Mira Bai, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi, we can realize that the significance of Indian modernities lies in bringing to the fore strivings for multi-dimensional self-development where self-transformation contributes to world transformation and where an aesthetics and ethics of servanthood is an important mark of being modern rather than the will to power.

But such an open-ended approach to civil society and paths of Indian modernities seems to be missing from certain dominant Indian sociological theorizing. For scholars such as Andre Beteille (2001) and Dipankar Gupta (1997), civil society is a modernist category of thought and practice guaranteed by the state. Beteille writes:

»(...) I will not try to give a definition of civil society but instead sketch out the context in which it may be meaningfully described. While doing so, I would like to repeat that civil society is a feature of the modern world, and it will serve little purpose to look for alternative forms of it in the medieval or ancient world« (Beteille 2001: 294).

For Dipankar Gupta, »(...) if tradition is allowed to gain the upper hand then it is not civil society and with it the concomitant growth of freedom that develops« (Gupta 1997: 141). In discussing the potential for the formation of civil society that

---

4 For Uberoi, »The struggle to define and establish civil society in India during the modern period runs parallel to the rise, development and recognition of the vernaculars and vernacularism everywhere in language, labour and culture; and it is the story of religion and politics proceeding from Kabir (1440–1518) to the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi« (Uberoi 2003: 123). Uberoi himself says that civil society is not only a modernistic category and we can explore struggles for Indian modernities and civil societies from the strivings of Buddha and his social struggles to build new critical spaces.

the social mobilization of Bharatiya Kisan Union of Mahendra Singh Tikait of Uttar Pradesh, Gupta says: »When it comes to the laudable objective of curbing liquor and drug addiction, here too methods are traditional and repressive. Even if someone gives someone the legitimate contract to vend liquor, the outlet should be forcibly closed « (ibid.: 145). But Gupta does not look into the repressive apparatus of the state itself in flooding villages with liquor. While talking about Mahendra Singh Tikait, Gupta writes the following, among others: »(...) many of his followers have told me that on several occasions the BKU chief leaves a meeting and goes to his prayer room where he is not to be disturbed« (Gupta 1997: 60). But Gupta does not ask what significance prayer has in this movement leader's personal life as well as in his conduct in the public sphere. Such a derisive attitude is an instance of a modernistic bias and disdainful attitude towards tradition. Understanding civil society and paths of modernities in India challenges us to overcome this.

### Towards a Multi-Dimensional and Multi-Valued Understanding of Civil Society

In this context, we need a multi-dimensional understanding of and realization of the sphere of civil society and its multiple activities. For this, however, we need to overcome the dualism between tradition and modernity, right and good (cf. Habermas 1990), civil society and good society (cf. Beteille 2001) and institutionalization and mobilization. I suggest that the field of civil society consists of an autonomous space, interpenetrated by overlapping and interpenetrative circles of society, religion, state, market, social movements/voluntary organizations and self. Civil society is not only a space of »mediating institutions« (cf. Beteille 2001) but also of mobilization, where mobilization refers not only to socio-political mobilizations but also socio-spiritual mobilizations including reflective mobilization of self (cf. Giri 2004a).<sup>5</sup> Society and civil society are not co-terminous – civil society refers to that conscious and mobilized aspect of society which strives to create a space of critical self-reflections and public deliberations. Despite contentions and struggles, state and civil society are related again in a logic of autonomy and interpenetration. Here,

5 For Neera Chandhoke, »Civil society is not an institution; it is, rather, a process whereby the inhabitants of the sphere (i.e. civil society) constantly monitor both the state and monopoly of power within itself« (Chandhoke 2003a: 57). Chandhoke approaches civil society from the vantage point of continued mobilization though she seems to be stressing more political mobilization and less on reflective mobilization of self. Similarly Oommen (2001a) has a mobilizational approach to civil society while Beteille (2001) a predominantly institutional approach. This dualism between mobilization and institutionalization needs to be overcome for a fuller understanding of civil society.

social movements, different mediating institutions, and voluntary organizations play an important role. Civil society is also nourished by support from the market. Contributions from market actors such as corporate leaders and other market leaders contribute to the resource base of civil society. Now finally, insofar as the relationship between religion and civil society is concerned, one great challenge here is to overcome the dualism of religion and secularism. While for Beteille (2001), civil society is mainly a secular space, for Uberoi (1996) and Oommen (2001a) civil society is a space where religious associations and critical spiritual movements are also at work.<sup>6</sup> Beteille asks:

»How far do religious movements and assemblies for moral, ethical and spiritual discourses contribute to the formation of civil society?« and answers: »They may contribute a very great deal to the formation of the good society, depending, of course, on what one means by that phrase (...) I remain skeptical about what religious assemblies and movements can contribute directly to the formation of civil society, although there indirect contribution may be extremely valuable« (Beteille 2001: 307).

But for Oommen, »(...) religious organizations were very much part of civil society in pre-independent India« (Oommen 2001a: 229).

Critical spiritual movements such as Bhakti movements in Indian history have been important actors in articulating paths of Indian modernities and generating a space of autonomy, self-realization, social transformation and world transformation. Bhakti movements created a new social space of caste and to some extent gender equality, and they embodied inter-religious dialogue. For Chittaranjan Das (1997), the Sant tradition is a product of creative and transformative dialogue and encounter between Hinduism and Islam.<sup>7</sup> The participants of Sant tradition and Bhakti movements challenged people to go beyond accepted boundaries and generate a new space of togetherness.<sup>8</sup> The leaders of Bhakti movements wrote in people's languages, not in Sanskrit. Their literature has been one of love, protest and affirmation; for understanding paths of modernities in India we need to understand the public sphere of creativity in language, religion and society that the Bhakti movement created. This is not possible as long as we are bounded to an *a priori* dualistic logic of modernity and civil society which puts religion and civil society in two separate boxes.

---

6 It is interesting to note here that both Uberoi and Oommen are not following any universalizing conception of modernity. Oommen (2001b) follows a »multiple modernities« perspective in his work while Uberoi (2002) is one of the few proponents of Indian modernity.

7 This is similar to Uberoi's (1996) argument about Sikhism that it is a product of dialogue between Hinduism and Islam.

8 As John S. Hawley writes of Bhakti poets: »These poets' intimate involvement with their audiences – in their own life times, doubtless, but certainly down the generation as subsequent performers and their audiences – have taken up these roles – is the real democracy of bhakti« (Hawley 2005: 332).

Such an approach to civil society has a wider global significance, for example, understanding the relationship between Islam and civil society in East Asia. As Nikamura Mitsuo writes, urging us to take Gellner's views on the impossibility of civil society and Islam with a pinch of salt: »(...) for centuries Islamic civilizations have developed their own versions of civility and civil society which are different from the West. These have included the independence of Muslim communities (*umma*) from the state under the spiritual leadership of the *ulama* (Islamic scholars), rule of law to protect personal life and property, religious and ethnic pluralism, consultative and consensus methods of decision-making. In short, there has been civility and public sphere in Islamic world in its own ways including mechanism to control the arbitrariness of state power and to guarantee the autonomy of diversified associational life« (Mitsuo 2001: 5). According to Madjid, »(...) the notion of civil society or civilized society coined in the constitution of Medina by Prophet Muhammed makes a genuine part of the common heritage of mankind« (quoted in Mitsuo 2001: 5). Giving the examples of voluntary organizations and political movements such as Nahdaltul Ulama and Muhamadiya, Mitsuo urges us to understand the religious resources for Muslim voluntarism in Indonesia. In his work on civil Islam in Indonesia, Robert Hefner (1998) also urges us to understand its role in democratization of politics and society in Indonesia. But Hefner makes a larger point that calls for consideration from those of us who are bonded to a »post-traditional telos«:

»Viewed from the ground of everyday practice rather than the dizzying height of official canons, the normative diversity of traditional societies is far greater than most sociological models imply. As in China, Romania, and Islamic Indonesia, there are always »underdeveloped possibilities« – values and practices that hover closer to the social ground and carry unamplified possibilities. These low-lying precedents may not appear in high-flying discourse. Nevertheless, they are in some sense »available« for engagement and reflection, even if they have long been overlooked in public formulations. Under conditions of cultural globalization or cross-regional transfer, some legal actors may seize on exogamous idioms to legitimate and elevate principles of social action (such as equality, participation etc.) already present in social life, if in an underdeveloped, subordinated, or politically bracketed manner« (Hefner 1998: 20).

Here Hefner may have to consider that there are underdeveloped possibilities not only in so-called traditional societies but also in so-called modern societies. As there is underdeveloped possibility for participatory politics in the so-called traditional societies there are underdeveloped possibilities for reflective mobilization of self in contemporary modern and post-modern societies as well.

## Towards a New Understanding of the Activities and Aspirations of Civil Society

If civil society is a multi-dimensional space of autonomy and interpenetration, what are some of its activities, works and aspirations? I suggest that these are: love, labor, language, rules/law.<sup>9</sup> To begin with the work of love in the sphere of civil society, Uberoi (1996) urges us to realize how loving self-sacrifice of the martyrs is crucial to the work of civil society.<sup>10</sup> For Uberoi, it is the martyr, rather than either the heroes or the victims, who constitute the universal foundation of civil society. Though Uberoi has not discussed the barbaric misuse of ideology of martyrdom for annihilating men and women in religious traditions such as Sikhism and Islam, his emphasis on »loving self-sacrifice« is an important contribution to rethinking the modernist emasculation of civil society. For instance, one cannot understand the work of martyrs like Shankar Singh Guha Niyogi of Chatisgarh Mukti Morcha<sup>11</sup> without understanding the dimension of loving self-sacrifice in civil society not only as a space of association and mediation but also as a site of struggle. As Chandhoke writes about *Chatisgarh Mukti Morcha*, »Despite the fact that CMM used only non-violent means of protest such as peaceful demonstrations, *dharnas*, strikes, *morchas* and petitions – all of which are permissible in civil society – their protests were savagely put down. During a conversation with one of the CMM's leaders, I wondered whether it was not legitimate to use violence in a society where the regime virtually used violence against its own people. His answer was an emphatic no; violence, he argued, would impoverish the movement and denude it of any spirit of commitment« (Chandhoke 2003b: 206). Here, the struggle is both a political struggle of democratization of state and society and the spiritual struggle of realizing »power-free« existence (cf. Dallmayr 2001), i.e. not being a slave to the logic of power and using the instruments of power to oppress other people. This struggle is animated by a hope that the subaltern would embody a different subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and would not try to imbibe the same logic of dominant hegemony

---

9 This four dimensional conceptualization can be compared with four dimensions of civil society articulated by Cohen & Arato (1992) – publicity, plurality, legality, and privacy. There are no references to love and labor in this framework though the theme of privacy may touch upon the theme of love to some extent. But the theme of love in the present model also refers to socially transforming love.

10 In his reflections on civil society, Uberoi (1996) is not within the modernist trap. He neither considers civil society as a product of modernist transition in history (though he would not discount its significance in understanding the contour that civil society has taken in modern past and present) nor does he look at it through the dominant logic of power.

11 Chatisgarh Mukti Morcha is a multi-dimensional social movement of tribals and workers in the Chatisgarh region of India fighting for dignity and rights and its leader Shankar Singh Guha Niyogi was gunned down at the behest of the contractors and industrialists of the region.



(Chakraborty 2002). It is no wonder then that Chatisgarh Mukti Morcha strives for a new meaning of »what it means to be a Chatisgarhi citizen. According to CMM, a Chatisgarhi citizen is one who works in the region and does not exploit either the resources or the people for his or her personal benefit« (Chandhoke 2003b: 238).

The relationship between the work of love and work of civil society becomes clearer in an interesting essay by Veena Das (2003) entitled »The small community of love.« For Das, »One cannot base the little community of love on an appeal to law – you cannot wait, as Cavell says, for the perfect larger community before you form the smaller communities of love. Thus the constitutional promise about life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness has the public face of what it is to claim this in law and the private face of what it is to ask that human society contain the room for these small communities to be built«. Elaborating this, Das further writes:

»In a conference I attended recently, someone asked if a song like »*Tu Hindu banega na Musalman banega – Insaan ki aulad hai insaan banega* (whether you would become Hindu or Muslim, the son of man would become a son of man)« from *Dehlee ki Phul* was still possible. I thought of Mr. Insaniyat (humanity) and how he learnt that the claims of building small communities of love was also a way of learning to be Indian.«

In his article »Romantic Archives: Literature and the Politics of Identity in Bengal«, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2004: 682) also writes:

»(...) What politics can we reconstitute out of our romantic investment in language? The politics I have in mind, however, is not programmatic. The making of a romantic literary legacy into a political archive is not something we can call into being. Romantic thoughts no longer furnish our analytical frameworks, but the inheritance of romanticism is built into the Bengali language. Our everyday and unavoidable transactions with the poetry of language may thus be compared to the practice of vigilant waiting. This vigilant and active waiting can itself be political – listen to the romantic voice of a Bengali communist poet who captures its spirit:

(...) When the rains depart / We will put out in the sun / Everything that is wet / Woodchips and all / Put out in the sun / We shall / Even our hearts«.

Continuing our exploration of the relationship between the work of love and work of civil society from a philosophical and theological perspective, Giani Vattimo (1999) tells us that we are all in need of forgiveness because we have failed in love. Such a recognition of failure in love helps us to be repentant for our lack of ability to transform situations of conflicts and avert many social tragedies. Given the significance of the work of reconciliation and forgiveness in many societies such as South Africa or India after the violence of apartheid or communal conflicts, the work of love is quite central in civil society organizations working on post-conflict reconciliation.

From the aspiration and work of love in the sphere of civil society, let us now move to the work of labor. Civil society is not only a sphere of public deliberations and discursive argumentations, but also a sphere of labor where laboring bodies come together and build new spaces of habitations and hopes. Gandhi's conception of labor helps us in understanding this link between the work of labor and work of civil society so does Swadhyaya's (a socio-spiritual movement in contemporary India) vision and practice of *shramabhakti* – devotional labor (cf. Giri 2005). In Swadhyaya, participants come together and build foundations of collective well-being such as digging village wells through shared devotional labor. The work of Habitat for Humanity, a Christian socio-religious movement in the US, is also similar. This organization works throughout many countries around the world; its volunteers build houses together with prospective homeowners (Giri 2002a).

As civil society is also a sphere of institutions, rules and laws are quite central, though it is important to acknowledge that civil society as a space of mobilization may challenge many rules and laws within which civil society institutions may function.

To come now to the subject of language in the work of civil society, in many ways it is quite central, as has been attested by theorists of civil society and public sphere such as Habermas (1989). A Habermasian perspective on civil society helps us understand the key importance of communication, especially communicative action, in the work of civil society. In the history of India we find struggle for people's languages beyond the language of the elites and the *pundits*. Movements such as Bhakti movements as well as contemporary Dalit movements (cf. Tewari 2001; Pandian 1998) have played an important role in creating people's languages and literatures and contributed to a new self-awareness among people as well as new themes and spaces of discursive deliberations about self, society and polity. For example, in Orissa, Sarala Das wrote the epic Mahabharata in Oriya. The Panchasakshas or the five friends such as Achyutananda Das and Jagannatha Das in the 16th century not only translated epics such as Ramayana into Oriya but also created life-elevating literature. They also contributed to building study centers for studying these works in villages (cf. Das 1987). These reading spaces, though limited by caste and gender inequality, contributed to the generation of new spaces of conviviality and conversations. But while understanding the relationship between language and civil society in these manifold ways, it is helpful at the same time to acknowledge the limits of language in the work of civil society. While civil society is a sphere of critical deliberations, this very work itself calls for listening on the part of participating actors, and this in turn calls for the ability to cultivate silence in discursive argumentations.

## Civil Society and the Calling of Self-Development

Though modernist discourse of civil society has been imprisoned within a predominantly statist and political model, it is Hegel himself who urges us to understand the link between civil society and self-development when he urges us to understand the significance of inner conscience in overcoming one's egotism in civil society (Dallmayr 1993; Giri 2002b). The proponents of Scottish Enlightenment, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, also urge us to understand this link. In this tradition of Scottish Enlightenment, »the idea of civil society came to rest on the notion of autonomous and moral individual as standing at the foundation of social order« (Seligman 1995: 215). Recently, Amartya Sen (2002) has argued that Adam Smith's notion of the impartial spectator suggests a different pathway of justice (where the individual takes responsibility for justice) from the Rawlsian one. The space of civil society also calls for development of the ability to be impartial spectators in and among the actors. This capacity to be »impartial spectators« can be accompanied by efforts to put oneself in the shoes of others. The latter is suggested in Edward Shils' plea for development of virtues of civility. As Beteille interprets:

»In his characterization of civil society, Shils assigns some importance to the virtues of civility. Civil society cannot prosper unless its members are able to put themselves, at least to some extent, in the position of their political opponents and their social inferiors. It is in this view of the subject (...) the idea of civil society comes closest to that of good society« (Beteille 2001: 291).

Along with putting oneself into the shoes of one's opponents or inferiors, participation in the space of civil society also calls for the ability to listen rather than just demonstrate one's performative competence in discursive argumentation. Though the Habermasian approach to civil society and public sphere is open to the rise of post-conventional moral sensibility in self and society, Habermas has not paid enough attention to the need for cultivating the capacity for listening or generating appropriate social and ontological condition for listening. The challenge here is a deeper one, as it calls for a foundational border-crossing going beyond valorized linguistic pragmatics and acknowledging the constitutive as well as continued significance of silence in the work of discourse itself.

Such border-crossing engagement calls for going beyond the modernist conception of rational self and to realize what William Connolly (2001) calls »plurivocity of being«. The Habermasian self, as that of Bourdieu, and most of us modernists, is mainly a techno-practitioner (cf. Faubion 1995). Here, we need to realize that self has also a transcendental dimension, i.e. that aspect of self which establishes friendship and solidarity across boundaries, for example between the self and the other. This is suggested in Spinoza's conception of transindividuality (cf. Gatens/Llyod 1999) and Roy Bhaskar's (2002) recent discussion of the transcendently real self as

an inalienable dimension in the work of our everyday life. Self-development refers to development of all the dimensions of self – sociological as well as transcendental (cf. Giri 2004b). Considered from the point of view of the challenge of self-development, much work needs to be done in theory and practice. Even scholars who put the challenge of self at the core seem to take it for granted. Consider here the following reflections of Uberoi and Mohanty. For Uberoi (2003: 124): »In Gandhi's civil society the self would always look the other in the eye as its second self, and offer dialogue and non-violent conversation without fear of the possible consequences.« For Mohanty (2003): »In the conception of creative self every entity grants other entities status for seeking creative fulfillment. In other words, *it is not placed as Self vs. Other. It is in a framework of Self and Self*« (emphases in the original). But how does one treat other as self and oneself as another? Does it call for ontological as well as social processes of self-development? Put briefly in tune with the multi-valued perspective of civil society presented earlier, such a mode of relationship on the part of self calls for ongoing practices of self-development on the part of actors and institutions facilitated by participation in love, labor, language, and rules/laws.

### Civil Society and Self-Development: Some Further Issues of Theory and Practice

Civil society as a space of creativity, public deliberation, self-cultivation, socio-political and socio-spiritual struggles calls for continued self-development on the part of actors and institutions. As has already been suggested, some of the challenges of self-development in the sphere of civil society are: development of the capacity of listening, overcoming the logic of power and domination, creating a condition for critical reflection, and establishing relations of non-duality, non-domination and non-violence not only between self and other but also as a foundation of social order. It should be clear that these are as much challenges for individuals as for institutions. Beteille looks at civil society as mainly consisting of mediating institutions but does not explore the challenge of self-development and transformations such as realization of a reflective space and dialogical democracy that institutions of civil society face so that these institutions contribute to multi-dimensional self-realization of actors rather than repressing or suppressing them.

Voluntary organizations and social movements are an important part of civil society. Often, these organizations suffer from the problem of entrenched authoritarianism. Here, self-development calls for realization of dialogical democracy on the

part of leaders and institutions. Those who work with them are often treated as bonded laborers and their needs for self-development are not given sufficient attention (cf. Giri 2004a). In my study of one such NGO, I found that the funds allocated for staff development in this remained unutilized for years. This organization at the same time continues to provide support to tribal people in their struggle against multinational mining companies at great risk to itself and its workers. According to one of the leaders of this organization, voluntary action has both a constructive and confrontational side and when it confronts state and market, its decision of confrontation cannot be solely an organizational decision. If there is not enough preparation in courage, self-sacrifice and integral moral responsibility towards suffering humanity, it is difficult to be on the side of the people when actors are confronted with dire consequences (cf. Giri 2004a).

Such a challenge of self-development confronts not only voluntary organizations but also social movements. Social movements often work as hegemonic entities suppressing creative unfoldment of their participants. In this context what Monanty (2003: 17) writes deserves our careful consideration:

»Self here is perceived as a creative self and not an obsessive self or exclusivist assertion of an identity. (...) We have also seen people's movements functioning as monolithic movements not allowing democratic dissent within or not allowing freedom to the sub-groups within the movement«.

In the era of globalization, the challenge of self-development has more facets than just doing yoga. It requires personal knowledge of the shifting trajectories of state, market and the global system.<sup>12</sup> First of all, voluntary organizations, movements and institutions in civil society can learn from each other. Voluntary organizations in countries such as India are not condemned only to receive funds from such donor agencies as HIVOS from The Netherlands and ACTIONAID from the UK and execute programs among the poor in their localities; they should come and study poverty in the UK and the Netherlands, thus creating conditions for reciprocal learning. There has to be more people-to-people contact and learning. When this happens as in the Habitat for Humanity global village program (cf. Giri 2002b) or in mutual visits among slum dwellers' associations of South Asia, this creates conditions for critical and reflective learning. As Arjun Appadurai (2002) tells us, when

12 In this context what Mohanty writes deserves our careful consideration: »The current historical situation is characterized by an ever-intensifying contradiction between hegemony and self-realisation. It manifests at every level, global, national and local in spatial terms and class, caste, race, ethnic, gender and such other terms of social relations. The former reflects struggles over political power vertically and the latter involves contests horizontally while all of them intersect at numerous levels. Global capitalism is the principal force whose influence decisively permeates all the contradictions at present« (Mohanty 2003: 15).

leaders from slum improvement associations of Karachi visit their counterparts in Mumbai, they ask questions about funding and transparency which one does not ask so innocently in one's home locations. Such questions create the opportunity for critical self-reflection on the part of the host organization.

### By Way of Conclusion

Self-development has been a neglected theme in the discourse of civil society. The present essay has explored links between civil society and self-development, i.e. how civil society has to contribute to self-development of individuals and institutions and how self-development is crucial to a revitalization of civil society. But understanding this link challenges us for a multi-dimensional and multi-valued understanding of civil society going beyond many modernistic dualisms such as private and public, tradition and modernity, civil society and good society, and religion and secularism. Such a multi-valued understanding not only helps in a new understanding of civil society but also paths of Indian modernities in society and history.

### References

- Appadurai, Arjun (2002), »Deep Democracy: Urban Governmentality and the Horizon of Politics«, *Public Culture*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 21–47.
- Beteille, Andre (2001), »Civil Society and Good Society«, *Sociological Bulletin*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 286–307.
- Beteille, Andre (2002), *Sociology: Essays on Approach and Method*, Delhi.
- Bhaskar, Roy (2002), *Reflections on Meta-Reality: Transcendence, Everyday Life and Emancipations*, New Delhi.
- Chandhoke, Neera (2003a), »A Critique of Civil Society as the Third Sphere«, in: Tandon, Rajesh/Mohanty, Ranjita (eds.), *Does Civil Society Matter? Governance in Contemporary India*, New Delhi, pp. 27–58.
- Chandhoke, Neera (2003b), »When the Voiceless Speak: A Case Study of the Chatisgarh Mukti Morcha«, in: Tandon, Rajesh/Mohanty, Ranjita (eds.), *Does Civil Society Matter? Governance in Contemporary India*, New Delhi, pp. 198–242.
- Cohen, Jean/Arato, Andrew (1992), *Civil Society and Political Theory*, Cambridge, MA.
- Connolly, William E. (2001a), *The Ethos of Pluralization*, Minneapolis.
- Connolly, William E. (2001b), *Achieving Our World: Toward a Global and Plural Democracy*, Lanham, MD.
- Dallmayr, Fred R. (1993), *G.W.F. Hegel: Modernity and Politics*, Newbury Park, CA.
- Das, Chittaranjan (1997/1951), *Achyutananda O Panchasakha Dharma* (Achyutananda and the Religion of the Panchasakhas), Cuttack.

- Das, Veena (2003), »Small Community of Love«, retrieved from <http://www.india-seminar.com/2003/525/525%20veena%20das.htm> (10/12/2005).
- Faubion, James D. (1995) (ed.), *Rethinking the Subject: An Anthology of Contemporary European Social Theory*, Boulder.
- Gatens, Moira/Lloyd, Genevieve (1999), *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present*, London.
- Giddens, Anthony (1994), »Living in a Post-Traditional Society«, in: Beck, Ulrich/Giddens, Anthony/Lash, Scott (eds.), *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Cambridge, pp. 56–109.
- Giri, Ananta Kumar (2002a), *Building in the Margins of Shacks: The Vision and Projects of Habitat for Humanity*, Delhi.
- Giri, Ananta Kumar (2002b), »Rethinking Civil Society«, in: idem, *Conversations and Transformations: Towards a New Ethics of Self and Society*, Lanham, MD.
- Giri, Ananta Kumar (2004a), *Reflections and Mobilizations: Dialogues with Movements and Voluntary Organizations*, Delhi.
- Giri, Ananta Kumar (2004b), »Self-Development, Inclusion of the Other and Planetary Realizations«, in: Salemink, Oscar/van Harskamp, Anton/Giri, Ananta Kumar (eds.), *The Development of Religion/The Religion of Development*, Delft.
- Giri, Ananta Kumar (2005), *Self-Development and Social Transformations? The Visions and Experiments of the Socio-Spiritual Mobilizations of Swadhyaya*, Lanham, MD, forthcoming.
- Chakraborty, Dipesh (2002), *Habitations of Modernity: Essays on the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, Chicago.
- Chakraborty, Dipesh (2004), »Romantic Archives: Literature and the Politics of Identity in Bengal«, *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 654–682.
- Gupta, Dipankar (1997), *Rivalry and Brotherhood: Politics in the Life of Farmers in Northern India*, Delhi.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1981), *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, Cambridge.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1989), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, MA.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1990), *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Cambridge.
- Eisenstadt, Shmuel N. (2002), »Some Observations on Multiple Modernities«, in: Sachsenmaier, Dominic/Riedel, Jens/Eisenstadt, Shmuel N. (eds.), *Reflections on Multiple Modernities: European, Chinese and other Interpretations*, Leiden, pp. 27–41.
- Hawley, John Stratton (2005), »Bhakti, Democracy and the Study of Religion«, in: idem, *Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas, and Kabir in Their Times and Ours*, Delhi.
- Hefner, Robert W. (1998), »On the History and Cross-Cultural Possibility of a Democratic Political Ideal«, in: idem (ed.), *Democratic Civility: The History and Cross-Cultural Possibility of a Modern Political Ideal*, New Brunswick, NJ, pp. 3–49.
- Mitsuo, Nakamura/Siddique, Sharon/Bajunid, Omar Farouk (eds.) (2001), *Islam and Civil Society in South East Asia*, Singapore.
- Mohanty, Manoranjan (2002), »The Self as Center in the Emerging World of the Twenty-first Century: A Sino-Indian Perspective«, *China Report*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 1–10.
- Mohanty, Manoranjan (2003), »Creative Self and its Enemies in the Emerging World«, *Gandhian Perspectives* X1, No. 1/2, pp. 15–21.
- Narayan, Badri (2001), *Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contesting Memories and Dalit Political Discourse*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies.
- Oommen, Tharailath Koshy (2001a), »Civil Society: Religion, Caste and Language in India«, *Sociological Bulletin*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 221–235.

- Oommen, Tharailath Koshy (2001b), »Multiple Modernities and the Rise of New Social Movements: The Case of India«, *Indian Social Science Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 1–16.
- Pandian, M. S. S. (1998), »Stepping Outside History? New Dalit Writings from Tamil Nadu«, in: Chatterjee, Partha (ed.), *Wages of Freedom: Fifty Years of the Indian Nation-State*, Delhi, pp. 292–309.
- Sen, Amartya (2002), »Justice Across Borders«, in: De Greiff, Pablo/Cronin, Ciaran (eds.), *Global Justice and Transnational Politics: Essays on the Moral and Political Challenges of Globalization*, Cambridge, MA, pp. 37–51.
- Tandon, Rajesh/Mohanty, Ranjita (eds.) (2003), *Does Civil Society Matter? Governance in Contemporary India*, New Delhi.
- Uberoi, Jitendra Pal Singh (1996), *Religion, Civil Society and State: A Study of Sikhism*, Delhi.
- Uberoi, Jitendra Pal Singh (2002), *The European Modernity: Truth, Science and Method*, Delhi.
- Wuthnow, Robert (2004), *Saving America? Faith-Based Services and the Future of Civil Society*, Princeton.
- Vattimo, Gianni (1999), *Belief*, Cambridge.